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GENERAL ASSEMBLY
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Items 20 (b), 38, 40, 81, 99
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STRENGTHENING OF THE COORDINATION OF HUMANITARIAN AND DISASTER RELIEF ASSISTANCE OF THE UNITED NATIONS, INCLUDING SPECIAL ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE: SPECIAL ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE TO INDIVIDUAL COUNTRIES OR REGIONS
SUPPORT BY THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM OF THE EFFORTS OF GOVERNMENTS TO PROMOTE AND CONSOLIDATE NEW OR RESTORED DEMOCRACIES
COOPERATION BETWEEN THE UNITED NATIONS AND THE ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE
MAINTENANCE OF INTERNATIONAL SECURITY
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC COOPERATION
ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

SECURITY COUNCIL
Fifty-second year

Letter dated 26 June 1997 from the Permanent Representative of Greece to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to draw to your attention the Thessaloniki Declaration on Good-Neighbourly Relations, Stability, Security and Cooperation in the Balkans, adopted at the meeting of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Countries of South-eastern Europe, held at Thessaloniki, Greece, on 9 and 10 June 1997 (see annex I), as well as the Chairman's summary (see annex II).

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I would be grateful if you would have the text of the present letter and its annexes circulated as an official document of the General Assembly, under items 20 (b), 38, 40, 81, 99 and 100 of the preliminary list, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Christos G. ZACHARAKIS
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Greece
to the United Nations

ANNEX I

Thessaloniki Declaration on Good-Neighbourly Relations, Stability, Security and Cooperation in the Balkans, adopted at the meeting of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Countries of South-eastern Europe, held at Thessaloniki, Greece, on 9 and 10 June 1997

The Ministers for Foreign Affairs of countries of South-eastern Europe - Mr. Blagoj Handziski, Mrs. Nadezhda Mihaylova, Mr. Milan Milutinović, Mr. Theodoros Pangalos, Mr. Adrian Severin, Deputy Minister Mr. Albert Rakipi and Deputy Under-Secretary Mr. Ali Tuygan - met at Thessaloniki on 9 and 10 June 1997.

Representatives of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (Ukraine), the Central European Initiative (Bosnia and Herzegovina), the Contact Group (France, Germany, Russian Federation, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America), the Council of Europe, the Administrative Council of the Social Development Fund of the Council of Europe, the Presidency of the European Union (Netherlands), the General Secretariat of the Council of the European Union, the European Commission, the European Investment Bank, the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training, the High Representative, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (Denmark), the South-east European Cooperative Initiative, the Economic Commission for Europe, the World Bank and representatives of Armenia, Austria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Italy, the Republic of Moldova, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden and Ukraine also attended as observers.

The Conference on Stability, Security and Cooperation in South-eastern Europe, originating from countries of the region and reaffirmed by the Sofia Declaration of 7 July 1996, reflects the determination of those countries to strengthen their ties and cooperation, transforming the region into an area of peace, stability and economic prosperity.

The Ministers for Foreign Affairs declare their determination to actively promote good-neighbourly relations, stability, security and cooperation in the region. They underline their commitment to work together to ensure the rapid economic development of the area, with particular emphasis on the liberalization of trade and infrastructure projects, which will secure the prosperity of the peoples in the region.

They affirm their conviction that the intensification of democratic institutions, respect for human rights and the development of civic society, accompanied by a free-market economy, will lead to the consolidation of stability in the area.

They believe that the promotion of human contacts is an essential element for strengthening the ties among peoples in the region.

The European orientation of the States of the region is an integral part of their political, economic and social development. Their intention is to

contribute actively to European integration, motivated by the same principles that helped to establish and develop what is today the European Union.

Developments which have taken place in the area since the Sofia conference underline the importance of further implementation of the above principles. Overcoming economic problems in South-east European countries in transition is an important prerequisite for the maintenance of stability and an essential factor for the development of the region. In this context, the Ministers recall the message to the European Union by the South-east European countries, presented by Greece on behalf of the participating States, at the General Affairs Council of the European Union on 24 February 1997 and reaffirm its contents.

I. ENHANCING POLITICAL COOPERATION

A. Stability and good-neighbourly relations

The Ministers reaffirm their belief that relations among the countries of the region should be based on the universally recognized principles of good-neighbourly relations set forth in the Charter of the United Nations, the Helsinki Final Act and the Charter of Paris for a New Europe.

They express their determination to respect and put into practice all 10 principles referred to in the Helsinki Final Act: sovereign equality; respect for rights inherent in sovereignty; refraining from the threat or use of force; inviolability of frontiers; territorial integrity of States; peaceful settlement of disputes; non-intervention in internal affairs; respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief; equal rights and self-determination of peoples; cooperation among States; and fulfilment in good faith of obligations under international law.

They decide that they should, whenever necessary, exchange views and consult on matters designed to enhance stability, security and good-neighbourly relations, including the implementation of the above principles.

The Ministers take note of the proposal to hold an international forum of leading personalities from the participating States with a view to promoting good-neighbourly relations and invite the country which has initiated the idea to further elaborate its content, format and modalities.

The Ministers support the efforts of the international community in consolidating peace and stability in the region.

B. Confidence- and security-building measures

The Ministers share the view that confidence- and security-building measures are of particular importance for enhancing peace and stability in South-eastern Europe. They stress the significance of agreements on confidence- and security-building measures signed so far, complementary to the Vienna Document of 1994.

The Ministers, taking into consideration the importance of strengthening peace and stability in the area, recommend a regular survey and exchange of views by exerts on the implementation of agreements on confidence- and security-building measures concluded so far and the exploration of the potential for developing confidence- and security-building measures with a scope of application in the area. They take note that the first meeting is to be held as soon as possible, at an appropriate level, at Skopje.

The Ministers support the initiation of necessary consultations on the agenda and the timing of the meeting of Ministers of Defence to be held at Sofia.

C. Democratization process

Further intensification of democratic institutions and the development of civic society are indispensable elements of peace, stability and reconciliation in the region.

The Ministers stress in this context the role which independent non-governmental organizations may play, particularly by establishing mutual communication, cooperation and coordination at the regional level.

The Ministers take note with interest of the creation, upon a Greek initiative, of a non-governmental organization, the Centre for Democracy and Reconciliation in South-eastern Europe, based at Thessaloniki, which will provide assistance to that end. In this context, a conference was held at Thessaloniki in March 1996 on the subject "Democracy and civil society in the Balkans". They also take note that a second conference is scheduled to take place at Thessaloniki, from 26 to 29 June 1997, on the subject "Culture and reconciliation in South-eastern Europe".

They encourage the establishment of similar institutions in countries where they do not yet exist and recommend working out modalities of cooperation among them, leading eventually to the creation of a region-wide centre for encouraging democracy.

Recalling that during the Sofia meeting the establishment of a consultative assembly of their Parliaments was proposed, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs agree to recommend to their national Parliaments that they consider that proposal, with a view to exchanging ideas among parliamentarians on the process of multilateral cooperation in South-eastern Europe.

D. European orientation

The European orientation of the States of the region is an integral part of their political, economic and social development.

The countries of South-eastern Europe look forward to taking an active part in shaping future developments, both in the region and in Europe as a whole. The Ministers expressed the view that European integration cannot be complete

without their countries' participation based on the same principles that helped to establish and develop what is today the European Union.

The Ministers stress the important role of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) for peace and stability in Europe and consider that the accession to NATO of the South-east European States which have applied for membership to that organization would contribute to the enhancement of its role.

E. The situation in Albania

The Ministers express their support for Albania's efforts to return to political stability and to achieve restoration of internal security and economic rehabilitation. They also support the international community's actions to this end.

The Foreign Ministers of the participating States underline the necessity of immediately reinstituting internal peace and stability in Albania through the free will of the Albanian people, with full respect for its territorial integrity, sovereignty and political independence, in accordance with Security Council resolution 1101 (1997) of 28 March 1997.

F. Implementation of the Dayton Agreement

The Ministers emphasize that the full implementation of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina will eliminate an important factor of instability in the area. They note with satisfaction the implementation of this Agreement so far, although many steps remain to be taken.

They encourage all the parties to the Agreement to do their utmost for its full implementation, the establishment of common institutions in particular, as soon as possible.

II. DEVELOPING ECONOMIC COOPERATION

A. Inter-State cooperation

Further development of bilateral, multilateral and regional cooperation is a primary target for the South-east European countries.

B. Sectors of cooperation

The Ministers identify the following sectors of cooperation:

1. Promotion of trade and investment

Trade and investment promotion among South-east European countries is an essential instrument to transform the region into an attractive and competitive area of economic activity. To this end, there should be encouraged:

- The promotion of the free flow of goods, capital and services, taking into consideration the bilateral and multilateral international obligations and commitments of each country;

- The establishment of links among official agencies, banks, chambers of commerce and businessmen. In this respect, the importance of the role which could be played by the Association of the Balkan Chambers of Commerce is underlined;

- The removal of existing obstacles regarding investment and business activity in each country, further liberalization of trade policies and their harmonization with World Trade Organization (WTO) standards and practice;

- The harmonization of legislation in line with European Union standards, with the support, as appropriate, of existing European Union programmes;

- The elaboration of measures facilitating commercial exchanges, including measures which will create the necessary conditions for the establishment and the efficient functioning of free-trade areas, taking into account the obligations and agreements resulting from the European Union, WTO and other international organizations.

In view of the above:

- The practice of regular meetings, preferably at least once a year, of the Ministers of Trade could be introduced in the course of this year, in order to work out relevant measures for the promotion of trade and encouragement of foreign investments;

- The Ministers agree to establish a regional centre for trade promotion in Turkey;

- They support the idea of the enlargement of the Balkan Centre for Cooperation among Small and Medium-size Enterprises in Bucharest to include all the countries of the region as a way of promoting economic cooperation in South-eastern Europe.

The Ministers welcome the initiative of Greece to offer the services and facilities of its Balkan Institute for Technology Transfer in Thessaloniki to the benefit of other participating States in cooperation with their technology parks or similar institutions. Programmes of activities in this context will be prepared in cooperation with the said institutions.

2. Cross-border cooperation

The Ministers, in view of future concerted action on cross-border cooperation, agree to hold a meeting at Athens, preferably in the course of this year, of the aid coordinators and other representatives involved, especially with a view to further implementing the relevant European Union programmes at a more rapid pace, taking into consideration the efforts undertaken in other regional initiatives. They also agree to hold meetings, on a regular basis, of experts from the countries of the region to discuss all relevant matters in coordination with efforts undertaken within the framework of other regional initiatives.

3. Transport, telecommunications and energy infrastructure

The Ministers reaffirm that the rapid construction of the 10 pan-European Crete corridors, taking into consideration the results of the meeting of the European Conference of Ministers of Transport (Berlin, 21 and 22 April 1997), is an essential factor for the development of the whole region, the strengthening of economic cooperation among the States of the region and the opening of new, large perspectives for their economies.

They underline the proposals formulated during the Conference of the Ministers of Transport of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation and Central European Initiative countries (Sofia, 21 and 22 November 1996) regarding branches and extensions to these corridors. In this respect they emphasize the importance of the Third Pan-European Transport Conference (Helsinki, 23-25 June 1997), which will give further impetus to the rapid development of these corridors and all their branches and extensions, so that all South-east European countries can be included in the European transport network.

The Ministers note that the establishment of a trans-regional centre for transport infrastructure in Sofia, within the framework of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation and the Central European Initiative, will contribute to the promotion of the interests of all States in the region. At the same time they stress the importance of the widest possible participation in the Memorandum of Understanding.

The Ministers support the idea of holding regular meetings of experts as well as meetings at the ministerial level, when appropriate, to promote the transport infrastructure of the region in close coordination with the pan-European Crete corridors. In this context they welcome the proposal of Romania to host a ministerial meeting in the near future at Bucharest.

The introduction of economic criteria, modernization and cost-effective policies, aiming at the development of air-traffic infrastructure, air services included, will be accelerated. In this respect, the idea of setting up a Balkan agency for air-traffic safety should be further explored, in consultation with authorities of the International Civil Aviation Organization.

They also note the importance of harmonizing their transport legislation with the European Union legislation in that field.

They underline the importance of enhancing cooperation in the field of telecommunications. They welcome initiatives already undertaken in this respect, and in particular the progress made so far to establish a Balkan telecommunications pool that would promote a cost-saving environment for the benefit of all participating Balkan States.

The Ministers agree to establish at Athens a joint expert body, within the framework of the Balkan telecommunications pool, to explore concrete ways and means to promote cooperation in the field of telecommunications and to attract foreign investment.

They take note of the invitation of the Republic of Turkey to host the next meeting of their ministers responsible for Posts and Telecommunications on 14 and 15 October 1997.

They also agree that both bilateral and multilateral cooperation in the field of energy should be intensified. In this respect, they note the initiatives already undertaken by Balkan partners in the sectors of natural gas, electrical network links, new and renewable sources of energy and oil pipelines.

The Ministers support the idea of enlargement of the Black Sea Region Energy Centre at Sofia to include all the countries of the region as a way of promoting cooperation in the field of energy among the countries of South-eastern Europe.

The Ministers take note of the proposal to organize a meeting of energy industry experts with the aim of examining the exploration of energy potentials from countries of the region.

The Ministers recognize that, in view of the existence of various initiatives for region-wide cooperation in the economic field, such as the Black Sea Economic Cooperation, the Central European Initiative and the South-east European Cooperative Initiative, closer coordination and better processing of information is necessary in order to avoid duplication and to derive maximum benefit for all the countries of the region. In the cases where all the participating States are not members or participants in a cooperative initiative, practical ways and means should be developed to facilitate their participation in the existing schemes.

III. JOINT ACTION FOR ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

The Ministers express their support for common endeavours such as the creation of an information system for the monitoring and control of the transboundary impact of pollution and the effects of industrial and hazardous wastes upon the environment.

They underline the importance of the participation of all South-east European countries in the international conventions on environmental protection

The proposal for the establishment of a centre for environmental protection for the Balkan countries shall serve regional cooperation in this field. The

centre should cooperate with relevant national and international organizations. The Ministers take note of the interest of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to host it.

They agree to examine further the proposal for establishing a regional centre in Romania to deal with coordinated international actions for the environmental protection of the Danube-Danube delta and the Black Sea region.

IV. PROMOTION OF HUMANITARIAN, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL COOPERATION

The Ministers stress that:

- The protection of human rights is a fundamental obligation and dedication of the participating States;

- Social progress and development of civic society is their permanent target;

- The promotion of free circulation and contacts among peoples is an essential element for the establishment of a climate of confidence in the region;

- The promotion of free communication and the free flow of information is essential for the establishment of a climate of trust in the region. Further development of independent media would largely contribute to this effect;

- The participating States support the idea of holding a meeting of competent services of their international countries to discuss problems connected with present visa facilities among them, taking into account their international obligations;

- The development of scientific, educational, cultural and sports relations among the countries of the region is vital for strengthening mutual understanding and friendship among the peoples of the region;

- Proposals aiming at promoting wider contacts among peoples in the region in fields such as science, culture, arts, sports and tourism are supported, and a more active involvement of non-governmental organizations to this effect is encouraged;

- The participating States take note of the proposal of the Republic of Turkey to host a meeting of the Ministers of Culture of the countries of the region;

- Respect for the cultural heritage and the exchange of information on the illicit traffic of objects of cultural value is indispensable;

- The participating States recall the statement in the Tirana Joint Communiqué and the Sofia Declaration stressing that persons belonging to national minorities have the right within the constitutional order

of their country, guaranteeing equal rights and status for all, to express freely, to preserve and to develop their ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identify and to enjoy all human rights and fundamental freedoms in full equality with other citizens.

V. COOPERATION IN THE FIELD OF JUSTICE, COMBATING OF ORGANIZED CRIME AND ELIMINATION OF TERRORISM AND ILLICIT DRUG AND ARMS TRAFFICKING

The Ministers stress the need for closer cooperation in the field of justice, in the combating of organized crime and in the elimination of terrorism, and illicit drug and arms trafficking.

They express their condemnation of all acts, methods and practices of terrorism, regardless of their motivation, in all its forms and manifestations, and point out the need to take all necessary and effective measures in accordance with relevant provisions of international law and international standards of human rights.

The Ministers underline the importance of strengthening border controls and call for joint action against illegal and irregular migration. They agree on a semestrial review of cooperation in this field. They encourage the conclusion between States of the region of agreements concerning the readmission of persons illegally residing in each State's territory.

A common concern is expressed with regard to the proliferation of drug-related criminal activities adversely affecting the countries of the region.

The Ministers agree that representatives of the ministries of the Interior and Justice and the relevant national institutions and agencies should meet on a regular basis to examine the possibilities of elaborating ways of cooperating to prevent any illicit practices, as described above. In this context, a conference of the heads of these institutions and agencies, with the involvement of the relevant international bodies and programmes (such as the United Nations International Drug Control Programme and the Council of Europe's Pompidou Group) and the European Commission could be held to consider the establishment, with the assistance, inter alia, of the PHARE (Poland-Hungary Aid for the Reconstruction of the Economy) programme, of a regional programme for cooperation on combating organized crime and preventing illicit drug and arms trafficking, which would complement national efforts in this respect. This programme should also envisage the accession of all countries of the region to the relevant international conventions and their effective implementation, the exchange of information on the legislation of the countries and the changes taking place in them and creation of modalities for a quick response to requests for legal assistance.

The Ministers encourage cooperation and contacts among the police forces of their countries to prevent any illegal actions which run contrary to the internationally adopted instruments and the legitimate interests of participating States.

VI. INTERACTION WITH OTHER INITIATIVES FOR REGIONAL COOPERATION IN SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPE

A. Royaumont Initiative and the South-east European Cooperative Initiative

The Ministers underline that the other initiatives for cooperation in south-eastern Europe, i.e., the Royaumont Initiative of the European Union and the South-east European Cooperative Initiative, are complementary to the Conference of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Countries of South-eastern Europe and are mutually reinforcing. The participation of all South-east European countries in the South-east European Cooperative Initiative would be of interest to this regional cooperation effort.

Specific programmes and projects of the participating States should be presented for coordination and fulfilment in the framework of the Royaumont process and the South-east European Cooperative Initiative.

B. Coordination with the Black Sea Economic Cooperation and Central European Initiative

The Ministers emphasized the importance of close coordination on matters of common interest with other regional initiatives, such as the Black Sea Economic Cooperation and the Central European Initiative. Several of the participating States are also participants in such regional initiatives, where projects of general interest, such as the establishment of free-trade areas, are examined.

VII. FOLLOW-UP MECHANISM OF THE PROCESS

The Ministers agree that their representatives should hold preparatory and follow-up meetings on a regular basis in order to facilitate coordination and consultations on matters of common interest. In this context, the Ministers agree on continuing the practice of regular meetings of the political directors. Ministerial meetings should also take place on a regular basis in order to streamline and enhance cooperation. They further believe that summits should be convened when circumstances call for it.

The holding of meetings of experts in different fields is essential for the enhancement of cooperation.

The States members of the European Union and the European Commission are invited to examine closely the proposals included in the present declaration with a view to identifying concrete fields and projects of common interest.

The Ministers invite the European Union to develop further its policy for South-eastern Europe in a way similar to that of other regions in Europe.

The Ministers express their belief that this conference has been an important step forward towards cooperation and stability in South-eastern Europe. Its positive results will undoubtedly contribute to strengthening

regional cooperation and exploring new paths for the development of the area. The agreements reached and the constructive spirit which prevailed at the conference attest to this end. In this context, the Ministers decided to hold the next follow-up meeting at the political directors level at Athens. It was agreed to hold the next meeting of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Countries of South-eastern Europe in Turkey in 1998.

ANNEX II

Chairman's summary

The meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of countries of South-eastern Europe, held at Thessaloniki, Greece, on 9 and 10 June 1997, confirmed the will of the participating States to proceed firmly towards strengthening stability and good-neighbourly relations in the region. In this respect, they reaffirmed all 10 principles referred to in the Helsinki Final Act: sovereign equality; respect for rights inherent in sovereignty; refraining from the threat or use of force; inviolability of frontiers; territorial integrity of States; peaceful settlement of disputes; non-intervention in internal affairs; respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief; equal rights and self-determination of peoples; cooperation among States; and fulfilment in good faith of obligations under international law.

During the meeting, the importance of civic society in the democratization process and the European orientation of the countries of the region as an integral part of their political, economic and social development was also underlined.

Infrastructure development was spotlighted as the basic vehicle of the whole development of the region. Transport, telecommunications and energy are the main sectors.

The participating States are following with particular interest and are participating actively in the alignment of the 10 pan-European Crete corridors, taking into consideration the results of the meeting of the European Conference of Ministers of Transport (Berlin, 21 and 22 April 1997). Cross-border cooperation and communication among peoples constitute basic elements of economic and social development, while the dynamic increase of trade and investment remains a first priority.

It is particularly significant that for the first time, parallel to the Ministers' meeting, the business community of countries of South-eastern Europe deliberated on ways of cooperating closely and on the targets of their future action, with great success.

The Ministers underlined their conviction that economic development should not occur at the expense of the environment, and they pledged to undertake action towards protecting the environment.

A common belief was expressed that the human dimension in our action was the paramount component, while a common determination was reinforced to combat organized crime and illicit drug and arms trafficking and to work for the elimination of terrorism.

To promote mutual understanding, reinforce a climate of trust and enhance cooperation, the Ministers agreed to submit to their Heads of State or Government a proposal to convene informal summits of Heads of State or

Government with the Foreign Ministers of countries of South-eastern Europe. The first of those summits could take place in Crete, in November 1997. Subsequently, every country holding the presidency could host the summit, at the end of the year, after the meeting of Foreign Ministers.